

PRODUCING  
PERFORMANCE

PRODUCING  
ATMOSPHERE









Photo: Ian Kacungira

# CREATIVE PORTFOLIO

## PRODUCING PERFORMANCE, PRODUCING ATMOSPHERE

Looking Beyond Development in the Production of Art  
and Performance in East Africa

POPPY SPOWAGE



A photograph of a man leaning out of a train window, holding a camera up to his eye. The train is moving through a dry, hilly landscape under a clear sky. The train has a yellow and green livery. The man is wearing a grey sweater. The background shows a line of hills and some sparse vegetation.

# INTRODUCTION

Producing Performance, Producing Atmosphere (2016–2020) is a practice-based PhD which looks beyond development paradigms to reimagine the relationship between art, performance and change in East Africa. My work as a producer with Nyege Nyege International Music Festival (2016–2018) and East African Soul Train (2016–2020) formed the basis of this study. As a producer I am committed to platforming contemporary art and cutting-edge performance practice from across the region. The role of the producer has been overlooked in the academy, but my practice has enabled me to think across the social, aesthetic and material worlds of both projects, giving me a unique perspective. I argue that atmosphere is crucial in performance. In this research I have used my practice to explore how atmosphere is generated, manifests and why it is important in an East African context.



This portfolio provides a visual introduction to Nyege Nyege International Music Festival (NNIMF) and East African Soul Train (EAST). There are also a number of QR codes that link to short films, which I reference throughout the thesis. In the portfolio I have been selective. I have visualised different atmospheres and captured moments of art and performance, as well as themes that I draw on in the thesis, which are relevant to this research project (2016–2020). The portfolio will work best if read as an introduction to the projects, and then alongside the

thesis where I point to particular pages.

The images and films I have curated were originally created by artists, professional photographers and filmmakers engaged in both projects, who have been credited throughout this portfolio. Producing is a relational practice. Whilst impossible to recognise everyone personally, both projects have been brought to life by hundreds of individuals – from artists to security guards – who I am extremely grateful for and would like to sincerely thank.



Scan the QR code to connect to a playlist of sounds that have accompanied me throughout this research project. It can be played to evoke different atmospheres whilst reading this creative portfolio and the thesis.



There are a number of other QR codes throughout this portfolio. They link to different videos that I reference throughout the thesis. How you will watch these will depend on your smartphone. On an iPhone simply go to your camera and point it at the code; it will then automatically load the video or playlist. This should also work on your Android device but, if not, please download the free QR & Barcode Scanner app from the Google Play store. Once downloaded, open the app and point the screen at the code. It should then open the link.





# NYEGE NYEGE INTERNATIONAL MUSIC FESTIVAL

NNIMF is an annual event set on the banks of the River Nile in Jinja, Uganda. It was founded by Derek Debru and Arlen Dilsizian in 2015, and has quickly become a household name in the world of electronic music. Known for its ground-breaking curation and respected for showcasing the freshest sounds from the African underground music scene, the festival connects musicians from across Africa with one another, as well as with producers and artists working with African music outside of the continent.





Nyege Nyege Festival: What Went Down in 2016 (2017), a short film produced by Nyege Nyege and Mojo Films which provides an introduction to the festival.



NNIMF is a DIY festival. It began as a party centred around a range of artists who happened to be in the same place at the same time. Initially, the festival was bankrolled by its founders and managed by a community of volunteers with little to no experience in organising events of this scale. Each year, NNIMF has doubled in size and attracts a wide range of donors, corporate sponsors and high-profile artists. In 2018 we saw close to 10,000 festival-goers.



The Arrival of the Nyege Nyege Gods (2018), a short film produced by Nyege Nyege showing revellers arriving at the festival and the new businesses that crop up in the local neighbourhood.

Alongside providing a platform for underground artists, the festival's long-term ambition is to support other creative activities throughout the year. Debru and Dilsizian are also the directors of two internationally renowned record labels – Hakuna Kulala and Nyege Nyege Tapes – an artist management agency, a residency and studio space in Kampala. The focus of all the initiatives has been to contribute to the local arts and cultural industry by creating platforms and opportunities for upcoming talented artists from across the region.





NYEGE NYEGE'S ATMOSPHERE  
IS ITS USP.

THE WORLD'S BEST ELECTRONIC MUSIC FESTIVAL [...] IN OVER  
TWO DECADES OF FESTIVAL-GOING, I'VE NEVER WITNESSED  
ANYTHING THAT COMES CLOSE TO NYEGE NYEGE.

JOHN TWELLS, FACT MAGAZINE, 2018.





Nyege Nyege Dance Video (2018), a short film produced by Nyege Nyege which gives an impression of the festival's spirit and the unique atmosphere.



Nyege Nyege translates as the 'uncontrollable urge to dance' in Luganda. The festival's spirit – its atmosphere – is simultaneously edgy, curious, chaotic, respectful, joyful, inclusive, safe, wild, exhilarating, mad, impulsive, surprising, uncomfortable, celebratory, underground and eclectic. It's an infectious vibe that gets into people and it is what engenders all types of participation in the festival. It sells tickets and captures the imagination of audiences around the world. It attracts partners such as independent music platform Boiler Room, and draws some of the world's most cutting edge musicians to East Africa. It is NNIMF's atmosphere which, alongside its cutting-edge curation, has built the festival's global reputation.





Photo: Ntale Bahana



Photo: Ntale Bahana

I began working with Debru and Dilsizian in 2016, and produced three editions of the festival (2016–2018). My work centred around financial and operational management. This included: the financial management; overseeing logistics, including transport, accommodation and subsistence for staff, artists and audiences; supervising the site and stage set-up as well as operations throughout the weekend; managing security teams, production staff, box office, as well as specific partners and stakeholders.

Experiencing atmosphere as an audience member in 2015, and then producing the festival for the following three years, has offered me an opportunity to explore how atmospheres are generated, manifest and why they are important. I have paid close attention to the role of the producer in this matrix.



I worked alongside a small team, which from left to right has included: Production and General Chief of Happiness, Patience Asaba Katushabe; Music Producer, DJ and Troupe Manager DonZilla Lion; DJ, Photographer and Communication Mastermind Darlyne Komukama aka Decay aka Cardi Monáe; Nyege Nyege Co-founder and Label Head, Derek Debru; DJ Kampire; and Filmmaker and Tour Manager for Fulu Music, Arnold Aganze aka Zizuke.

In 2017, alongside the festival, I also ran a training programme for young East African producers, supported by the British Council. Designing and leading the programme helped me find ways of articulating the vast intersecting web of roles and responsibilities involved in producing a festival. This included finding a vocabulary for the affective and relational elements of a production that are rarely articulated and are hard to express visually – I expand on these points in the body of the thesis.



Photos: Muhammed Ali Kanch and Ntale Bahana







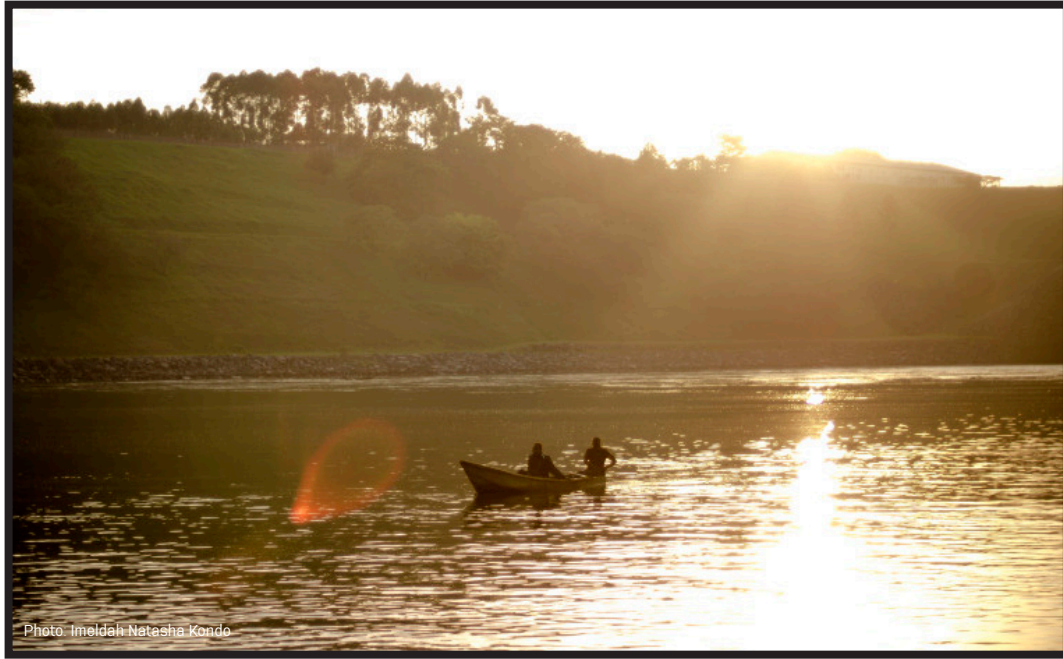


Photo: Imeldah Natasha Kondo

NNIMF is set within the grounds of a dilapidated resort called Nile Discovery Beach, in more than four acres of tropical rainforest. Each year, everything from stages to toilets, from water supply to electricity, has to be built from scratch or installed.

Whilst only managed by a small team, the festival is made possible thanks to around 300 staff and volunteers. From stage managers to security personnel, artist-liaison coordinators to taxi drivers, the deco team to the cleaners, the box office staff to the food vendors, my role involved having an oversight of each department and negotiating how all the different elements came together at any given moment. The following pages provide a visual interpretation of some of the different things that took place behind the scenes.



Photo: Muyingo Suraj

AUDIENCE GATHERS AT THE MAIN STAGE, 2018





BEHIND THE SCENES WITH THE COMMUNICATIONS TEAM, 2018





Photos: Carl St and Tweny Benjamin

BEHIND THE SCENES WITH THE DESIGN TEAM, 2017









Photo: Tweny Benjamin

THE CAMPING VILLAGE BEFORE THE CROWDS DESCEND, 2018





Photos: Muhammad Ali Karach and William Kane

In 2018 there were over 300 artists from 30 countries performing at the festival. Part of my job involved making sure that the artists' needs were met in terms of accommodation and storage facilities, transport to and from the site, food and drink, prompt payment of fees and allowances, and access to local sim cards. My role also involved hosting – looking after and entertaining artists – going above and beyond to ensure that everyone had a brilliant weekend and was able to create a memorable festival experience.







# BOILER ROOM TV

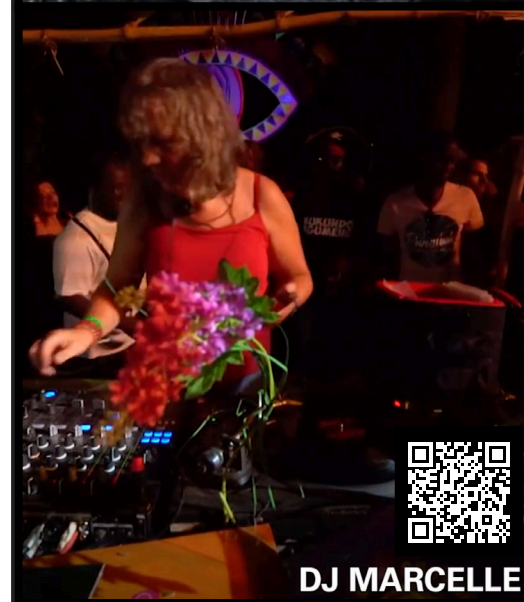
2018 WAS THE FIRST YEAR THAT  
BOILER ROOM CAME TO NYEGE  
NYEGE INTERNATIONAL  
MUSIC FESTIVAL.

Boiler Room is an independent music platform that broadcasts underground music as it happens, connecting club culture to the wider world through live-streaming, audio and film. Since 2010 Boiler Room have built a massive online community and a unique archive featuring over 4,000 performances, by 5,000 artists, spanning 150 cities.

With more than 3 million followers on Boiler Room's Facebook page alone, the partnership with NNIMF in 2018 enabled the festival to reach millions of people around the world.

The photograph on the left was taken backstage. On the following pages are links to a number of short videos of the final performances, which were shared widely on social media.

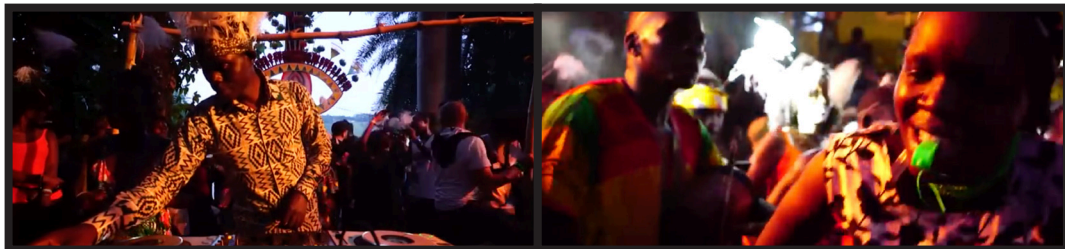








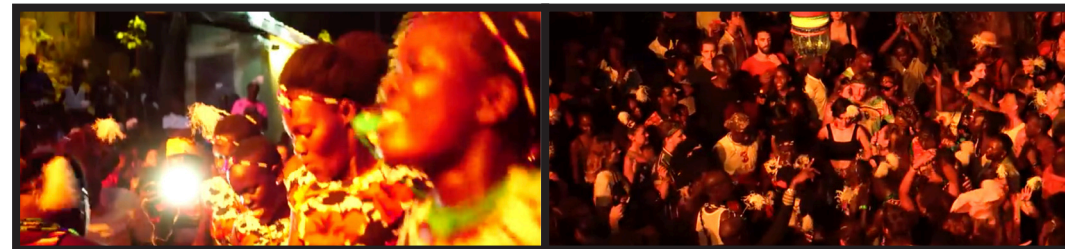
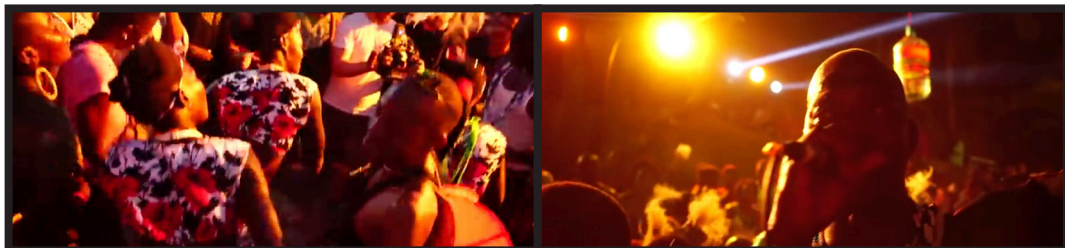




Squeezing my way through the crowd, I can feel my calves burn as I march up a particularly steep section of the pathway. 24,767 steps so far today. People are sitting and legs are hanging off every ledge. Branches and vines seeping out of every crevice, and if you look closely enough there's a large spider's web in a nearby bush that catches the roaming, fluorescent light every few seconds, at which point you can just make out its lodger. Bodies, beer and flesh everywhere: bare legs in hot pants and cleavages creeping out of cropped tops; open Hawaiian shirts, hats and bikinis; sequins, sunglasses, feather headpieces and fur. Asymmetric UV patterns coat hundreds of bodies and faces. Anything is possible. Are there any rules? A whiff of burning charcoal from the nearby rolex stand makes its way down from the top of the hill, carried by a light breeze. The sun is going down and the light is changing quickly. But it is still warm. Grabbing a semi-cold beer from a local bar – balancing it between phones, charging cables, power banks and walkie talkies – I look for a seat. En route to a balcony overlooking the Eternal Disco Stage, I

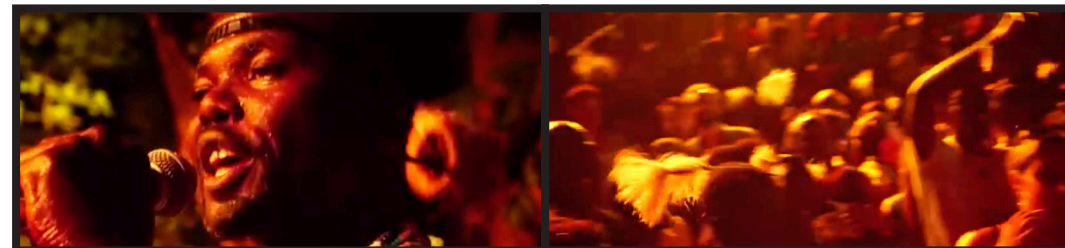


Here is a video of Otim Alpha and Leo P'layeng's Boiler Room debut performance on the Eternal Disco stage, 2018.



catch eyes: a smile, a wave, a hello – so many people and I'm not sure who I know and who I don't. Everyone is moving, chatting, ready – there is an anticipation circulating. Looking down at all the colours, shapes and bodies on the dance floor: sweating, laughing, waiting for the music to start. What's going to happen next? For a moment I could be anywhere... But then I look up, at the rainforest canopy: umbrellas, buckets and UV string; spotlights distorting the foliage. And out, at the River Nile: a magic eye looks back, with a small wooden platform made out of crates in the foreground. The light is disappearing, but I can still make out bodies splashing in the river. Someone swinging off a 12-foot iron structure in the river. The sculpture's alight! Volume up. Cameras on. Snap, snap, snap. An electronic rumble. A flute. The DJ begins. It's intoxicating. A swarm of people descend – overwhelmed by an uncontrollable urge to dance. The moment is broadcast live to hundreds of thousands of people around the world. I don't know what is going to happen, but it feels good. It feels like this is why I make performance.

Research Notes from NNIMF 2018  
Edited in Kampala, Uganda, November 2018





THERE ARE MANY DIFFERENT ELEMENTS BEHIND EVERY MOMENT IN A FESTIVAL.

THE  
STAGE

INTERNATIONAL DONORS  
STAKEHOLDERS PORTALOOS  
THOUSANDS OF AUDIENCE MEMBERS  
FROM AROUND THE WORLD

A 12-FOOT SCULPTURE, BUILT BY A LOCAL WELDER

BARS  
CREW

HUNDREDS OF ARTISTS

A FUNKTION1 SOUND SYSTEM FROM KENYA

CLEANERS

CHARCOAL ROLEX STANDS, CONTINUALLY  
EDGING CLOSER TO THE DANCEFLOOR

A RAINMAKER TO KEEP THE TROPICAL STORMS AT BAY

SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS, BLOGGERS, NEWSPAPER JOURNALISTS AND TV CREWS

CRAFT AND FOOD VENDORS

AS A PRODUCER, I FOCUS ON MAKING SURE THAT THE MATERIAL, SOCIAL AND AESTHETIC WORLDS OF A FESTIVAL COME TOGETHER IN ORDER TO REALISE THE EVENT IN THE BEST WAY POSSIBLE.

SECURITY DETAIL  
FUNDERS  
FACE-PAINTERS

OVER 50 VOLUNTEERS THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE DECO, MADE OUT OF HOUSEHOLD AND RECYCLED MATERIALS

AN INTERNET MAST AND AN  
ETHERNET CABLE FOR THE  
LIVESTREAM

SOUND  
AND  
LIGHT



A woman with sunglasses and a floral dress is performing at a festival. She is holding a microphone with the 'BOILER ROOM' logo and has her right hand raised. In the background, there is a crowd of people and a large, colorful circular structure. The scene is lit with warm, orange and red lights.

"A LITTLE BIT OF CHAOS IS ALL PART  
OF THE MAGIC."

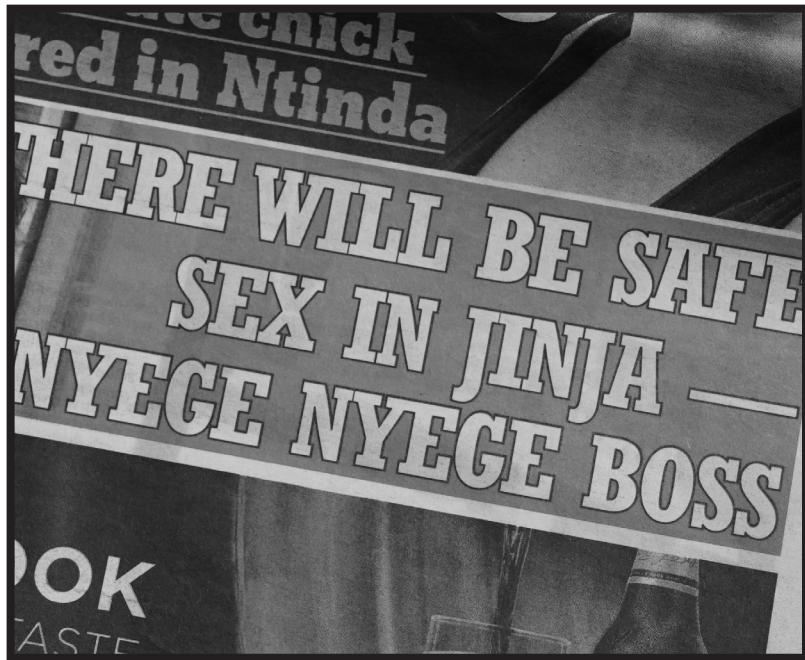
DEREK DEBRU, NYEGE NYEGE CO-DIRECTOR.

Throughout this research I have focused on the generative potential of atmospheres and uncertainty. For, whilst sometimes challenging, atmospheres and uncertainty can be productive and can lead to new possibilities for creatives and audiences.

Nyege Nyege Co-Director Arlen Dilsizian pointed out that to put on a festival in Uganda is 'to flirt with disaster ... everything is fluid'. At NNIMF the 'risky aesthetics' of the festival format, the precarity of the Ugandan context, and risk-management narratives of various stakeholders collide. Despite the team's best efforts, the who, what, why, how and when is constantly changing. Whilst this fluidity has posed almost insurmountable challenges, with at times the whole event facing collapse, it has also opened up fresh possibilities for the festival, its artists and its wider communities.

In 2018, days before the festival opened, it was cancelled by the local authorities on moral and ethical grounds.





There were attempts by the authorities to manage elements of the festival. But in the end it was reinstated and did go ahead.

Here is a video link to some of the press coverage surrounding the cancellation. Produced by Urban TV, Uganda



Photo: Muyingo Siraj





Photo: Zahara Abdul



Photo: Zahara Abdul

In the end, on the Eternal Disco Stage – filmed by Boiler Room – teenagers performed alongside their elders, and dancers teamed up with an eclectic local and international crowd. There were costumes, feathers and glitter, with people of all ages twerking, dancing and cheering, with sets from indigenous musical troupes alongside electronic DJs. It was a euphoric moment. The sense of uncertainty, of freedom, of power, of community, of difference and of fun was palpable. It was in the air. Dripping from the trees

and people's brows. It was a positive, vibrant and diverse expression of East African contemporary society and culture. Whether interpreted positively or negatively, this moment represented a disruption of the status quo and an opening up of new possibilities.



'IT FELT ESPECIALLY GOOD THIS YEAR TO SEE EVERYONE SHOW UP FOR NYEGE NYEGE FESTIVAL MORE VIVACIOUS AND VIBRANT THAN EVER. FEW PEOPLE THROW OR EVEN GO TO A GOOD PARTY WITH THE INTENTION OF BEING POLITICAL. I BECAME A DJ BECAUSE I LOVE MUSIC AND WANTED TO HEAR THE TRACKS I LOVE ON A MASSIVE SOUND SYSTEM. BUT CLEARLY THERE IS SOMETHING INHERENTLY POLITICAL ABOUT YOUNG, FEMALE OR QUEER PEOPLE GETTING TOGETHER TO DANCE. SO IT WAS MEANINGFUL TO SEE SO MANY UGANDANS TURN UP TO REJECT FAKE NEWS AND FALSE MORALISING AND NOT FORGET ALL THE CHALLENGING REALITIES OF DAILY LIFE, BUT FOR A FEW DAYS, EXIST BEYOND THEM.'

KAMPIRE BAHANA, 2018





Every year NNIMF has a huge impact on the local economy, bringing thousands of tourists to Uganda. The festival is also a platform for hundreds of underground musicians from across the region, and it is possible to make an argument for its social, cultural and economic impact. However, these are rarely the reasons why people attend the festival, why the team makes it happen or even why people become artists in the first place.

Throughout this project I have maintained a focus on the relational, contingent and contagious qualities of atmosphere in NNIMF and EAST, as a way of reimagining the relationship between art, performance and change in the region.



'WE CAN ATTEMPT TO PIN DOWN THE THEATRICAL MOMENT AS TIGHTLY AS WE CAN TO AVOID THE UNEXPECTED, REHEARSING AND REPEATING UNTIL EACH SHOWING IS AS SIMILAR AS POSSIBLE TO THE NEXT, OR WE CAN BUILD IN UNCERTAINTY AS PART OF THE AESTHETIC ENCOUNTER.'

ALICE O'GRADY, 2017.





# EAST AFRICAN SOUL TRAIN

Photo: Danny Msirikale

Kovu Safarini (2017), a short film that provides an introduction to EAST and showcases artists from the 2016 edition of the project.



EAST is a creative adventure and pop-up residency, centred around a journey on East Africa's historic railways. We bring artists, thinkers and cultural stakeholders together to co-create, connect and re-imagine. It is an emotional, physical and creative experience; it pushes boundaries, inspiring participants to experiment across geographies and disciplines. The ambition is to curate a space for creative risk-taking, that builds trust and connection, generates new practice, and raises the profile of the region's contemporary art and performance scene.







EAST was founded in 2016. Geraldine Hepp – Co-founder and Creative Director of EAST – had thought about going on an extended train journey with artists since 2007. Inspired by a large photo of a red locomotive – that caught her eye during a jam-session and brought the trans-Siberian railway to mind – the initial idea was to use the rhythms of the train as a baseline for a musical and visual exploration, a project that drew on the context of the train and the space/time limitations it presented. Nine years later, Hepp and I met in Kenya when collaborating on The Hatchery, a programme for cultural managers working in East Africa.

When I heard her idea, I said: 'Let's test it, let's take the train'. My role in our partnership was initially about making it happen. After 30 hours on the train – and after moments of inspiration, disagreements, experiencing the practical realities – together we created EAST.







As Co-founder and Creative Producer of EAST my role involves overseeing the operational and financial management of the project. However, as a project visionary, I am also intricately involved in designing the programme and curating the artists, stakeholders and thinkers that are engaged in each edition. EAST is committed to providing a platform for some of the region's most vibrant and dynamic art and performance artists.

The project has evolved in tandem with this research project. EAST has proved a space to test ideas about how atmospheres and uncertainty are produced, interrogate how they unfold, and understand why they matter in the context of a contemporary artist development programme.



Photo: Jude Clark






To date, EAST has engaged over 150 creatives from across the region, India, Europe and North America, as well as thousands of audience members. There have been two editions of the project in Kenya. In 2016, it started as a two-day journey with 54 participants on Kenya's 'Lunatic Express' railway line, powered by the Kenyan media outlet What's Good Life. In 2017, supported by the Belgian foundation Africalia and the British Council, it grew significantly into a five-day pop-up residency with 99 participants. In 2017, there was also a more formal process led by masterclass artists, as well as a range of workshops and public performances. In summer 2019, after the closing of the standard gauge railway in Kenya, we reduced the scale of the project to allow us to focus on devising a rigorous interdisciplinary process, whilst navigating the challenges and opportunities of bringing EAST to Tanzania.

The following pages include some of the participant profiles from each year.






**Labdi Omnes**  
Visual Artist  
Musician

"I am inspired by people. Not wildlife, or clear skies, or eluded emotions and feelings— just people. ..."

African taboo... not only literally! Labdi is a powerful vocalist and instrumentalist. Topics of love, deceit and pan-Africanism can easily be drawn from the music she puts out as well as the emotion she beams as she takes the stage. Genres she likes: Jazzy fusions, neo-soul, experimental and afro (house and pop).



**E. A. S. T.**  
East African Soul Trust


**Aparna Shrivastava**  
Musician

"Whether a flower poking into sunshine through cracks in concrete or a person pushing against all of life's attempts to break them, resilience is surely the greatest inspiration of all."

"I'd love to collaborate with a really competent accountant, a smart lawyer and an unrelenting social media strategist with a devilish sense of humor."

Chief Nyamwaya  
Creator

"I'm inspired by creativity & being a busy social icon of this nation."



Dream collaboration: Salif Keita, Nonku Phiri, Richard Bona, Kanye West, Stromae

LIANNE LA HAVAS!!!

Dream Collaboration

Labdi on Soundcloud



**Joanne Corrigan (SA)**  
Filmmaker, Artists, Promoter

"I'm inspired by the many musicians in South Africa who used and still use music to lift the souls of our people beyond the suffering of oppression and injustice to inspire visions of a future that could be."



**Rohini Das**  
String Artist  
Photographer

Rohini has a magical touch to everything she does. From mesmerising photography to breath-taking string art and fashion she knows how to transform reality.

**E. A. S. T.**  
East African Soul Trust



**Michel Ongaro**  
Musician

Michel is one of the best guitarists and instrumentalists in Kenya. His deep commitment to his art shows in countless musical collaborations.

"I'm inspired by sounds of nature, every day activities & people who have achieved their dreams against all odds."

Dream Collaboration: Mariza

Earliest Music Memory: "People who used to come home for prayers - they'd always start with singing."



**TAIC**  
DJ  
Rapper  
Beatmaker

"My biggest inspiration are my peers. There's something about youth, we don't have nearly as much as what we want or need, but still doing a damn good job at keeping the planet glowing regardless."

Dream Collaboration: Tyler The Creator. I respect his hustle, but then again it's a youth thing.



**Evans Campbell**  
Poet  
LP Collector

Evans is a lover of words and their power to overwhelm even in their death. He explores life through poetry and prose.

**E. A. S. T.**  
East African Soul Trust

"I'm inspired by raw, unadulterated emotion — anger, fear, hope, love, sadness."

Earliest memory of creativity: "Writing rhymes on the back of my English question papers in primary school"



**Bibi Setlana**  
"Binky Ball"

"Earliest memory of music is hearing Franco records being played on the tape player by my dad."

Dream Collaboration: Phyllis

"I'm inspired by people who do things well. I just adore them."

"My earliest memory of music or art goes back to my infancy. My mother would always sing. My father owned a guitar which hung on the wall more, than it was played."

Dream collaboration:



**Jojo Abot**  
Musician  
Curator

Lover of creation and a slave to the journey of self discovery. Breaking and rebuilding until my last breath.

"My biggest inspiration is life and survival. I'm fascinated by the human will"

Earliest memory of creativity: "The first 9 months of coming together in my mother's womb"

Dream Collaborations: Die Antwoord, Protoje and the Indignation, Kendrick Lamar, Missy Elliot

**E. A. S. T.**  
East African Soul Trust



**Daniel Onyango Nyatiti**  
Performing Artist

Daniel's music combines a rhythmic Kenyan melody that reflects the rich diversity of Kenyan cultural heritage.

Earliest Music Memory: "Listening to Fela Kuti with my dad."

Dream Collaboration: Ayub Ogada

**E. A. S. T.**  
East African Soul Trust



**Jacob Solomon Janki**  
Producer, Graphic Designer


"I am inspired by people, heartbreak and love"

Streetartist who has been painting for more than 16yrs. He has travelled to countries in Africa and Europe making people smile with his art

"I'm inspired by current affairs and life in general"

"I'm interested in collaborating with dedicated artists inspired by a cause."

**E. A. S. T.**  
East African Soul Trust




**Shelia Bell**  
Editor  
Presenter  
Vlogger

"I'm inspired by the world around me: nature people and the interaction it make with them. I'm especially inspired by those who think differently, independently"

Dream Collaboration: Margaret Wachira

**E. A. S. T.**  
East African Soul Trust




**Mo Pearson**  
Musician  
Yellow Light Machine

A vibrant old soul in a young body. Wishing to bring all together through art, creativity, expression and movement - feel me, I feel you.

"I am inspired by my environment, the people i am around, the different energies that i encounter day to day, the books I read, the movies I watch, and how I feel about myself & the universe"

Watch a video by Mo & Yellow Light Machine!




**Marion**  
Dancer  
Designer

Founder of the Dance Factory Company, Marion explores Afro Salsa, Kizomba and African dance and served as a judge in dance competitions. She organizes workshops and events that promote Cultural Exchange and has won several awards as a dancer.

"I am inspired by my environment, Africa, people, culture, food, music, art and creating connection with everything and nothing"

Earliest memory of creativity: "Dancing as a cow in drama club in Primary"

**E. A. S. T.**  
East African Soul Trust




**Tetu Shani**  
Folk-Musician  
Percussionist

Drawing from his experiences of having grown up in Zambia, Mauritania and Senegal his music is a mix of different cultures & genres that he calls "Mood Music."

"I'm inspired by the power music has to not only define our emotions but transform our thinking. That is what I strive to accomplish when writing or performing."

Dream Collaboration: Jack Johnson and Asa, Oh and Chris Martin!




**Miriam Ayoo**  
Singer-Songwriter

"I gain inspiration from womanhood and all the joy, pain, strength and resilience that comes from it."

Dream Collaboration: Tyler The Creator, Emily King, India Arie, Asa

**E. A. S. T.**  
East African Soul Trust



**Checkmate Mide**  
Performing Artist  
Beautician, Poet

"We are all meant for something bigger than just ourselves."

Earliest memory of music: "Listening to my dad's zilligendous albums blasting from the record player in his room every evening when he came home."

"I'm all about for something bigger than just ourselves."

**E. A. S. T.**  
East African Soul Trust





**ABE STACEY GILLIAN**  
E.A.S.T 2017  
UGANDA

| LIVE | EXPLORE | ALERT |

Abe's glass installations are integration between man and the spiritual realm from finding a balance and believing these spheres influence our individual identities. Her concepts transform into created imagined spaces with the installations taking Centre stage as they star in these new worlds. Her process highlights the strength and fragility of the female mind in the self.



**LEBON**  
E.A.S.T 2017  
DRC/UGANDA

RESPECT | SHARING | CREATIVITY

Lebon is a Congolese MC, breakdancer, fashion designer, and one half of Kongokolo. Based in Uganda, he is working Boutique Soundsystem on his first album which is due for release later this year.



**MALCOLM BIGYEMANO**  
E.A.S.T 2017  
UGANDA

ALL | THE | THINGS

Having graduated from the University of Cape Town with a Bachelor of Arts in Film Production at the end of 2014, Malcolm Bigyemano returned home to Uganda and explored a short career in advertising as a copywriter. Then he stopped lying to himself and quit to make films independently. He has since written and directed two short films (a drama and a meta-comedy) and will have completed a third by the end of the year 2016.

His bio on Tinder is a pair of pizza slice emojis which suggest that he is cheesy and delicious or something.



**DARLYNE KOMUKAMA**  
E.A.S.T 2017  
UGANDA

| WOMANIST | SHAMELESS | UNBOUND |

Darlyne Komukama is a photographer based in Uganda. Her favourite subject is her city, Kampala, and the women that call it home. Whether documenting survivors of gender violence for her project, My Body is a Dictatorship, or underground East African urban nightlife, her eye for tone and emotion serve her impeccably.



**OMARI JOSHUA**  
E.A.S.T 2017  
KENYA

MUSIC | LOCAL | EXPERIENCE

Omari is a talented singer and songwriter. He moved to Kenya to test his songwriting skills and to find his voice. He has been performing for years and is now a professional singer and songwriter.



**MARTIN KHARUMWA**  
E.A.S.T 2017 ARTIVATOR

| WHIMSICAL | INQUISITIVE | CAUTIOUS |

MARTIN KHARUMWA IS A PHOTOGRAPHER AND PART OF A GROWING COMMUNITY OF SELF TAUGHT PHOTOGRAPHERS IN EAST AFRICA.

AS A FREELANCER IN THE REGION HE HAS WORKED ON EDITORIAL ASSIGNMENTS AND FOCUSED ON DOCUMENTING CONTEMPORARY STORIES IN A WHIMSICAL STYLE. HIS MORE PERSONAL PROJECTS COLLABORATE WITH ARTISTS IN THE REGION TO CREATE A BODY OF WORK THAT UNIQUELY LENDS A LENS INTO HIS WORLD.



**NADDYA ADHIAMBO OLUOCH-OLUNYA**  
E.A.S.T 2017  
KENYA

GROWING | GRATEFUL | EXCITED

Naddy Adhiambo Oluoch-Olunya is an innovator and leader with a wealth of experience, driven by the need to understand and represent young women through her work. Having studied Sociology and an award-winning student of three, she is known for her understanding of the world around her and her passion for storytelling.



**GLORIA WAVAMUNNO**  
E.A.S.T 2017 ARTIVATOR  
UGANDA

| I FEEL | CONSTRUCT | EVOLVE |

UNDER THE ARTISTIC DIRECTION OF A UGANDAN, GW IS THE ART DIRECTOR OF HER NAMESAKE-CLOTHING LABEL. THE LABEL IS CONSTRUCTED FROM CULTURES, SOUNDS AND THE UNEXPLAINABLE.

FOUNDER OF KAMPALA FASHION WEEK.



**KAMPIRE BAHANA**  
E.A.S.T 2017  
UGANDA

FUND | ORGANISE | CREATE

Kampire Bahana is a writer, DJ and arts organiser. Her words have appeared in Jilada magazine, Chay Africa, and Afrosp Mag. Resident DJ with Soule Electronic, she opened for Jajo Abot at her Kampala Women's Day concert, played the Global Disco stage at Nygga Nygga 2016, and followed The Black Madonna at her Kampala debut, as part of Santika's Femme Electronic.

Bahana, the initiator she created with four other Ugandan women has visited festivals in Uganda and Ghana and will be in London and Kigali this year. She has developed fundraising and communication strategies for committed and passionate organisations including Marsha Foundation and Fundi Bots.



**SANYA NOEL**  
E.A.S.T 2017  
KENYA

DARING | RESOLUTE | LIVELY

Bio Sanya Noel lives and works in Nairobi where he writes from. He does poetry, fiction, and translation. Sanya's poetry has been published in Kwana? 08 and Kileleshwa and his fiction has appeared in Lawino. Omenana, and Kileleshwa. He writes and edits at Enkara Review. He was a past winner of the Bahiana New Poetry Award in 2016 and he's currently working on his first poetry collection.



**IMELDAH KONDO**  
E.A.S.T 2017  
KENYA

EXPERIENCE | CREATE | CONVERSE

Imeldah is photographer and (maybe) writer particularly concerned with African existence and curating stories and pictures of love and strength, endurance, heartbreak, passion, motion, intellect and beauty to understanding the physical anatomy of the body as well as the social environment that the African has been placed in and most importantly, expressing the human being beneath the skin and the beauty of who they are.



**MZUNGU KICHAA**  
E.A.S.T 2017 ARTIVATOR  
DENMARK

| I CREATIVE | ALTERNATIVE | COMMITTED |

MZUNGU KICHAA WAS BORN IN DENMARK BUT MOVED TO AFRICA IN 1996. THROUGH HIS WORK AT BONGO RECORDS IN THE LATE 90S HE PLAYED AN INSTRUMENTAL ROLE IN CREATING THE BONGO RECORDS LABEL, WHICH IS NOW ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR GENRES IN THE REGION. WITH THE RELEASE OF MZUNGU KICHAA'S DEBUT ALBUM 'TUKO PAMUJA' HE DID WITH SOLO THANG, MZUNGU KICHAA TOPPED THE EAST AFRICAN CHARTS FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 1999.

KICHAA'S DEBUT ALBUM 'TUKO PAMUJA' WAS RELEASED INTERNATIONALLY IN 2010 ON HIS OWN LABEL, BONGO RECORDS. THE RELEASE SAW HIM WIN BEST UPCOMING ARTIST AT THE AFRICAN ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS, AND A NOMINATION AT THE DANISH MUSIC AWARDS. THE BACK OF THE RELEASE, KICHAA DID THREE TOURS IN AFRICA AND FOUR TOURS OF SCANDINAVIA.

SINCE THEN HE HAS BEEN ON THE TEAM OF JUDGES FOR THE TANZANIAN VERSION OF THE X FACTOR, WORKED ON A COLLABORATION WITH DUTCH INTERNATIONAL RESIDU DU SONN O LUKU AND DURING A RESIDUE TOUR TO GERMANY WITH HIS TANZANIAN BAND AND REGGAE SINGER MALFRED HAS RELEASED 'WALUJACHA' WHICH HAS BECOME A CLUB ANTHEM.




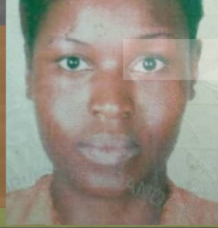




**RENÉE MBOYA**  
E.A.S.T 2017  
KENYA


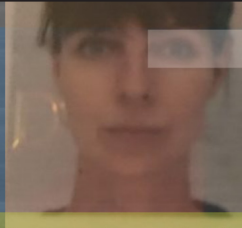



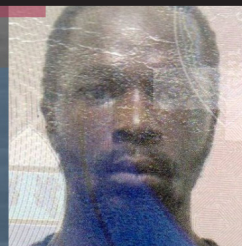
RESIST | RELEASE | RECOVER

Renée Mboya is a writer, curator and filmmaker based in Kilifi, Kenya. Her work is concerned with embodied memory and the use of autobiography in contemporary narratives to rehabilitate misrepresentations in history.

Renée's practice has evolved in this way, into one that relies on storytelling as a form of research and production.



 <p>un[known] dark waters calling</p> <p>E.A.S.T. 2019</p> <p><b>YULE BURLEFINGER</b></p>	 <p>un[known] adventure strange empty</p> <p>E.A.S.T. 2019</p> <p><b>ATIM CATU</b></p>
 <p>un[known] exploration curiosity resolution</p> <p>E.A.S.T. 2019</p> <p><b>BRIAN OCHIENG</b></p> <p>Singer Songwriter   Kenya</p>	 <p>un[known] space circle line</p> <p>E.A.S.T. 2019</p> <p><b>ADAM CHIENJO</b></p> <p>Artistic Director   Kenya</p>
 <p>un[known] persistent precarious potential</p> <p>E.A.S.T. 2019</p> <p><b>POPPY SPOWAGE</b></p> <p>Creative Producer   UK</p>	 <p>un[known] imaginative suffering horror</p> <p>E.A.S.T. 2019</p> <p><b>SAFINA KIMBOKOTA</b></p> <p>Visual Artist   Tanzania</p>

 <p>un[known] fear faith courage</p> <p>E.A.S.T. 2019</p> <p><b>DANNY MSIRIKALE</b></p>	 <p>un[known] emergence listening unknowing</p> <p>E.A.S.T. 2019</p> <p><b>SARAH DRAIN</b></p>
 <p>un[known] slaves death tradition</p> <p>E.A.S.T. 2019</p> <p><b>MAKEKE</b></p> <p>Traditional Costums Design   Tanzania</p>	 <p>un[known] dark inside space</p> <p>E.A.S.T. 2019</p> <p><b>DIYA NAIDU</b></p> <p>Dancer / Choreographer   India</p>
 <p>un[known] fear prejudice humility</p> <p>E.A.S.T. 2019</p> <p><b>NGANGARE ERIC</b></p> <p>Spoken Word/ HipHop   Rwanda</p>	 <p>un[known] god intuition hope</p> <p>E.A.S.T. 2019</p> <p><b>CHECKMATE MIDO</b></p> <p>Poet Musician   Kenya</p>



The next edition of the project is scheduled for July 2020. Alongside artists, we plan to engage a range of Pan-African thinkers and creative sector stakeholders. All participants will meet on the shores of Lake Victoria in Mwanza, and take the three-day train journey to the Indian Ocean. Across past and future editions of the EAST journey, there are pop-up performances along the tracks, and we dive deep into conversations and creative processes. In the next iteration, when we arrive at the coast there will be two days to develop a public performance and installation in partnership with TaSUBa – East Africa's oldest arts college.

Atmospheres matter. In every edition, the journey from the interior – via the train – to the expansiveness of the coast, has been generative and significant to the creative adventure.



Photos: Lena Giovanazzi and Jude Clark





2017

Have you ever been on a train and found yourself immersed in a deep conversation with a stranger? Perhaps because our first sensory experience is in an enclosed space, moving to a beat, something happens on train journeys that allows us to enter a different state of mind. With no power or phone signal, passengers move between the past, present and future. It is a sensory environment: doors swing open; windows shake and smash together; there is a consistent rattle against the tracks. Milk slurps and swirls, spilling out of the chipped crockery. A bell rings. An insect crawls out of the faded, musty, burnt-orange interiors; you can smell the heat of the sun. Suspended



for days in a nondescript location, somewhere in the savannah. While we experience limitations in the tight corridors and cabins, our minds travel far, taking in the vast landscapes, feeling a constant rhythm and movement shaking our bodies. Time spent collaborating, creating, chatting – squeezing past and squeezing in – sweltering, sweating and gasping for air amongst the dust and mosquitoes as the train rolls over East Africa's historical tracks – chug, chug, chug – is fundamental to the project. EAST brings bodies, materials and different environments together in a variety of ways. It is not comfortable or easy, but the journey, the train itself – its atmospheres – do things.

Research Notes from EAST 2017  
Edited in Kampala, Uganda, May 2017.



Photos: Lena Giovanazzi







Photo: Martin Kharumwa





The train's atmospheres act like a pressure cooker, intensifying everything. As well as the railway's historical significance, which brings passengers' shared colonial histories and contemporary experiences to attention, there is something unique about the time and space limitations of the train. The setting encourages focus and inspiration, as well as deep conversations. But it's not easy. Stepping outside one's comfort zone – physically and conceptually – is an integral part of the journey and of taking creative risks. In our experience the intensity of the environment and time spent together means that connections and collaborations go beyond that of a traditional industry fair, workshop or residency programme.





ATMOSPHERES DO THINGS.

"I SPENT YESTER-WEEK WITH A COLLECTIVE OF SOME OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL CREATIVE ON HISTORIC TRAIN TRACKS BUILT BY OUR ANCESTORS. IT WAS A WONDERFUL LEARNING EXPERIENCE FOR ME, FULL OF COLLABORATION, HARD WORK AND GROWTH. I FEEL SO COMPLETE, ENRICHED AND BLESSED. I'M STILL PROCESSING IT ALL BUT ONE THING IS FOR SURE, MY LIFE WILL NEVER BE THE SAME."

ARTIST, EAST 2017





As EAST's producer, my work centres on trying to create the effective pull or charge towards our ambitions: generating trust, connection and new creative practices. This includes engaging with the material, social and aesthetic elements of a project.



For example, across all three editions of the project, we experimented with mood – manipulating the temporal dynamics and heightening certain elements of the journey through material intervention. This was most significant in 2017, when set designer and curator Mirembe Musisi joined our team. Musisi led a group who used lighting and props to heighten spaces within spaces, enhancing or playing with the train's atmospheres and designing specific cabins that reflected or anticipated particular affects. There was the sanctuary, a silent cabin filled with germinating seeds which sought to provide relief from the intense environment; clocks and watches were suspended through the dining hall; origami, fabrics, masks and images lined the corridors; pieces of old machines and neon sculptures filled a glitch-themed cabin, a distorted vision of the past and future. There was also a care cabin where passengers could go for some respite, a conversation or just some peace. We underwent all these interventions in an effort to pre-empt and intensify the atmospheres of the train.



Photos: Jude Clark and Imelda Natasha Kondo





Photo: Jude Clark





Central to mine and Hepp's collaboration is the process of conceptual co-creation, transcending and leveraging the material, social and aesthetic limitations and opportunities at every stage of the process. Atmospheres are relational, taken up, experienced and transmitted in different ways by different people. As such, how people feel matters. In addition to the physical setting, paying attention to other elements of production, such as logistics, can enhance an experience and the work created. Throughout the whole project I do my best to manage all the elements

that contribute to the experience of the individual: the welcome, participants' expectations, available information, transport, food and accommodation. Making everyone feel – in their own ways – supported, informed and valued is integral to generating a caring atmosphere where trust, connections, and new creative practices can thrive.





Interpersonal relationships outside – as well as inside – the project are also critical support structures. Before embarking on the EAST in Tanzania we did a recce trip in March 2019. As well as getting a sense of the journey, our ambition was to build the necessary relationships with the railway companies, the Tanzanian National Arts Council (BASATA) and our Tanzanian partners including CDEA, TaSUBa, Nafasi Arts Space and Firefly Hostel. This visit was fundamental to forging partnerships. Still, everything remained uncertain.



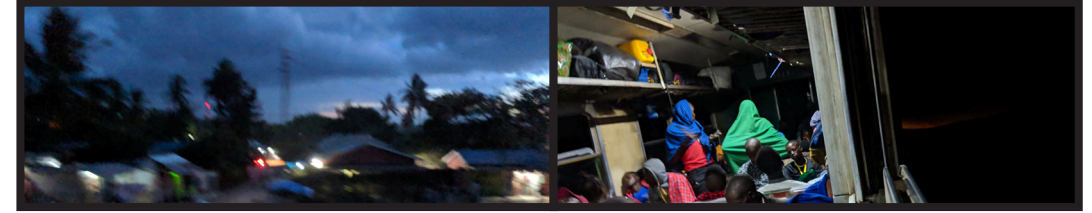
Photo: Jude Clark





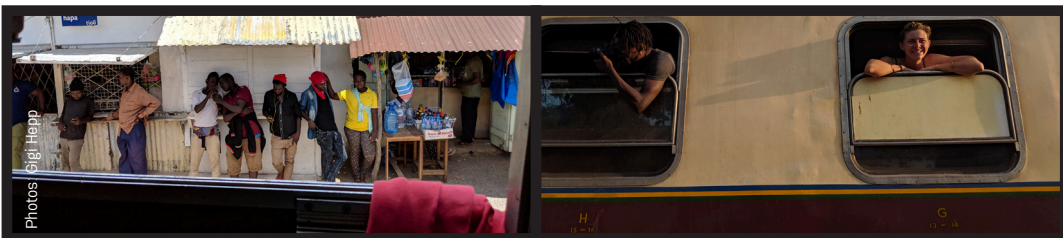
2019

On March 15th 2019 I left Kampala, Uganda, at 10pm on a Friday evening. I arrived in Mwanza at 4am on Sunday. 30 hours. Misplaced border papers, blown tyres and just one arrest meant a 15-hour bus journey quickly doubled. I was on my way to the small port city of Mwanza, on the shores of Lake Victoria in Northern Tanzania. The closing of the standard gauge railway in Kenya, between Nairobi and Mombasa, had meant that we needed a new route if we were to continue with East African Soul Train. Mwanza to Dar es Salaam seemed like the best alternative in the region. It was a central meeting point, with – in theory – good bus connections from the south of Tanzania, as well as from Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda and Kenya. After an abrupt arrival in 2017, we also wanted to extend the journey. It was also almost a three-day journey on the old train that ended on the coast, with access to the vibrant cultural scenes of Dar es Salaam, Zanzibar and Bagamoyo. The train, established during German East Africa in 1905, and extended by the British in the 1930s, holds similar colonial undertones to the 'Lunatic Express' in Kenya. And, with much of the infrastructure dating back to this era, the aesthetics and atmospheres of the journey chimed with our project. After a few hours sleep I met Boaz, a bank clerk and hip hop artist based in Mwanza, who was helping me to make arrangements. We scoped out possible taxi drivers, restaurants and hotels before heading to the station to collect our tickets. Despite pre-booking, we were informed that there would be no sleeper wagons available until Tabora. A night's sleep away... Later that day, dancer and choreographer

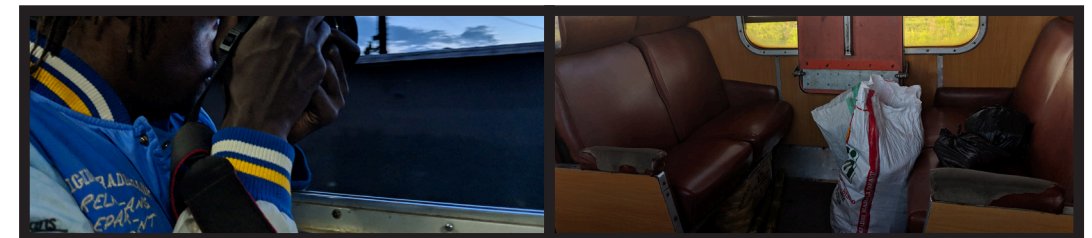


Adam Cheinjo and Geraldine Hepp arrived on a bus from Nairobi and we headed to the train station. We were squeezed onto a wooden bench. The carriage quickly filled up, and in a few hours people were curled up and sleeping below our feet, above our heads and across our laps. We glugged down a bottle of wine as cockroaches crawled around the window ridge and the samosa salesman touted for business in-between the snores. I couldn't move my arms. We drew to a stop in the early hours of the morning. After waiting for a while – still with no sleep and not wanting to miss out connection in Tabora – we decided to walk. Led by a few phone lights we carried our luggage through bushland in the dark. We followed other passengers and a couple of kilometres later we all bundled into a car for a dollar each and were dropped at the next station. The lorry that had broken down on the tracks was eventually removed. After three nights I had a bed...or at least something resembling one. We chugged slowly across Tanzania's savannah, stopping for anything between five minutes and three hours at stations along the way. To say the least, it was unpredictable. On arrival, exhausted, we had three days of back-to-back meetings in Dar es Salaam and Bagamoyo. Potential partners and donors were charmed by the project, but there were still so many unknowns without taking into account the process itself. The idea of undertaking this journey with artists seemed absurd. Still, despite the uncertainties, two months later we took 16 creatives on the train, and will do it with up to 40 in the summer of 2020.

Research Notes from EAST Recce trip, 2019  
Edited in Kampala, Uganda, April 2019.

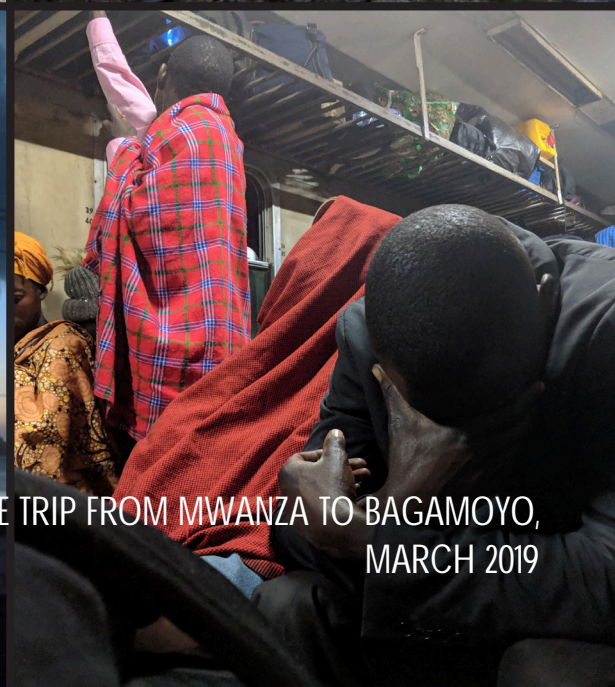


96



97





IMAGES FROM RECCE TRIP FROM MWANZA TO BAGAMOYO,  
MARCH 2019





Uncertainty is a contextual and aesthetic reality in EAST. Rather than shying away from the tempestuous qualities of atmospheres, a product of their uncertainty, we have harnessed them as a catalyst for new creative practices.







A woman with dark skin is singing passionately into a microphone. She is wearing a white lace-trimmed cardigan over a colorful patterned top and a matching headwrap. The scene is set outdoors at night, with warm orange and yellow lighting from a large spherical lamp in the background. A DJ setup with a laptop and turntables is visible to the right.

UNCERTAINTY MATTERS.

"THANK YOU SOUL TRAIN FOR CREATING A CONTEXT THAT ALLOWED ME AND MANY OTHER PEOPLE TO [RE]CONNECT MORE AND MORE PROFOUNDLY WITH OUR CREATIVE SELVES. IT'S BEEN A SAFE HAVEN THIS JOURNEY, WHERE MASKS COULD FALL OFF, BOUNDARIES WERE CHALLENGED AND PUSHED AND REDRAWN, DISCOVERIES MADE, MAGIC HAPPENED. THANKS FOR ALLOWING THE MESSINESS OF CREATIVE PROCESSES AND TRUSTING ARTISTS TO DO WHAT THEY ARE BEST AT, CREATE AND INSPIRE."

ARTIST, EAST 2017.





A SELECTION OF IMAGES FROM THE FINAL  
WORK-IN-PROGRESS PERFORMANCE, 2017.

Photos: Jude Clark





Photo: Jude Clark

In EAST we use atmospheres and uncertainty as a generative technology. EAST is a catalytic space where the project's outcomes are handed over to the participants. Each year there is a theme, but this is meant more as a launch pad for artists' creativity; it is not intended to be restrictive. There is a no-obligation performance opportunity, and the hope is that people will forge new connections, test out interdisciplinary techniques and take creative risks. We anticipate collaborations that continue beyond the project but, in keeping with the spirit of EAST, none of this is mandatory or guaranteed.





Photo: Martin Kharumwa



The project and its atmospheres have sparked ongoing connections, collaborations and new creative practice in each edition. However, year on year and from artist to artist, this has looked and manifested in surprisingly different ways. Embracing atmospheres means recognising that they are experienced – taken up and put down – in different ways, by participants throughout the process. For example, two films produced during the 2017 edition of the project in Kenya vary drastically in tone, style and content. Each film is a product of both the makers' historical and contemporary experiences, as well as the bodies, atmospheres and materials that they encountered and collaborated with along the way.



Photo: Lena Giovannazi





Photo: Danny Msirikale

Speak Soon (2017) is a short film by Nikissi Serum-aga about leaving things behind and trying your best to move to the next part of your life with grace. It was filmed as EAST 2017 happened, and showcases artists from the second edition of the project.



X EAR X (2017) is a short film by Emily McCartney, created in collaboration with 16 other artists from the 2017 edition of EAST. It is a surreal piece that moves between fiction and reality, capturing some of the histories, atmospheres and affects experienced along the journey.

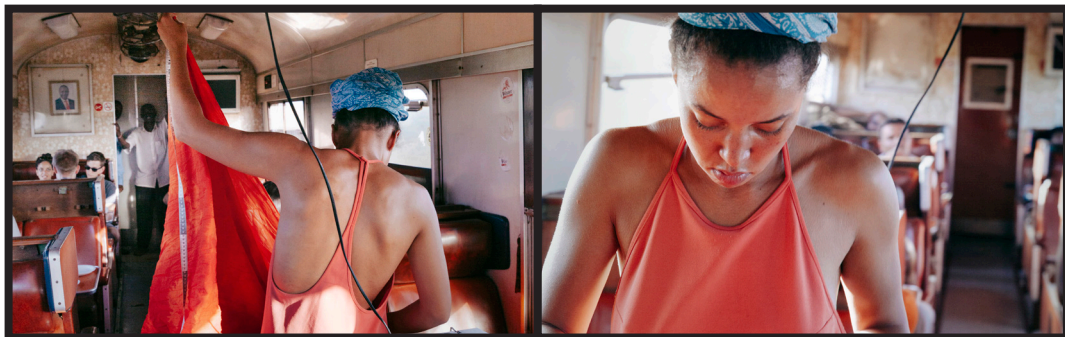


In any given moment, there were multiple possibilities in terms of the formation, content and outcome of creative practice and conversations. Who engaged, what was created and how it was shared was always open. The following pages feature some research notes that capture my experiences of new work that emerged from the project's atmospheres and sense of uncertainty.



Photo: Lena Giovannazzi





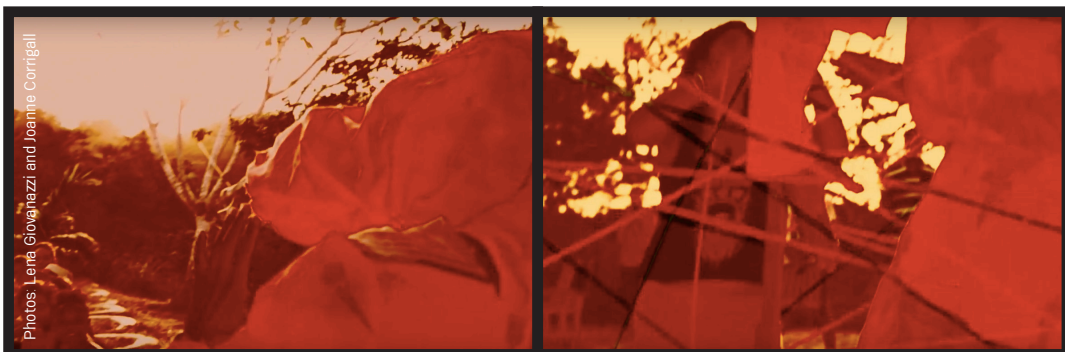
2016

I tripped on the edge of an endless piece of orange fabric as I stumbled into the dining room; the rattle of the sewing machine sang in harmony with the rumble of steel on tracks. The cloth complemented the burnt orange upholstery and the dated interiors were overridden by a vibrant energy. Bodies moved in, between, across and under Nicola Armitage as she worked. We were curious, excited, inspired. People gravitated towards Armitage, towards the fabric: drawn to the possibilities, to the play. Dancer and choreographer Adam Chienjo wore the final piece, and together they experimented, played and moved together, in and around



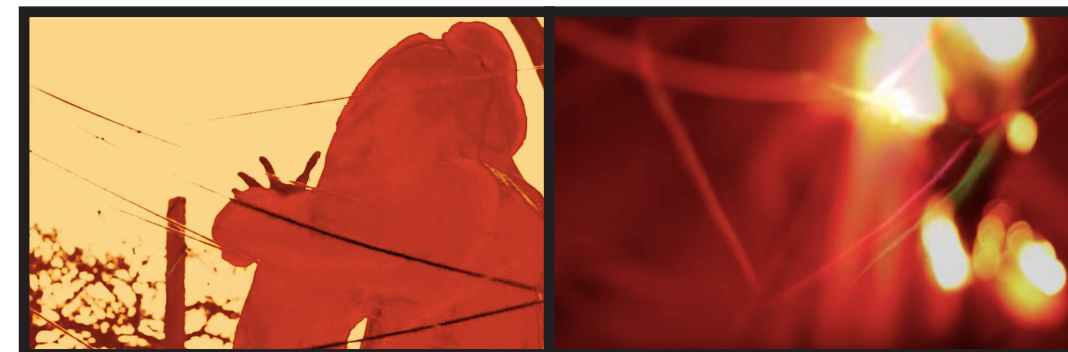
the restrictions and possibilities of both the space and the fabric. These moments were captured by filmmaker and photographer Lena Giovanazzi, within the confined spaces of history, on the train, and then between elaborately assembled wires, which had to be negotiated in an installation created on the coast. The images of this peace captured the essence of the project; it embodied and captured different conversations between artists, played with conceptual and physical boundaries and revealed the potential of an intricate interdisciplinary experiment.

Research notes from EAST 2016  
Edited in London, UK, November 2016.



Photos: Lena Giovanazzi and Joanne Corrigan

116



117





'THE NATURE OF THE WORK REMINDED ME OF WHY WE BECAME ARTISTS IN THE FIRST PLACE. THE ESSENTIAL HUMAN NEED FOR ART WAS BROUGHT BACK INTO MY CONSCIOUSNESS AFTER THE MADNESS OF TOURS AND HUSTLING TO MAKE ENDS MEET. THE POWER OF OUR WORK TO SERVE OUR COMMUNITIES BECAME EVIDENT AGAIN, EVEN TO RECLAIM AND TRANSFORM HISTORICAL WOUNDS BY THE SIMPLE ACT OF COMING TOGETHER. THE NEED FOR ARTISTS FROM DIFFERENT CULTURES TO MEET AND COLLABORATE, AS ONLY ARTISTS CAN. FOR ME, EAST REITERATED THE IMPORTANCE OF WHY EXCHANGES BETWEEN COUNTRIES WITH SIMILAR HISTORIES OF OPPRESSION AND CULTURES, NOT JUST COLLABORATIONS WITH THE GLOBAL NORTH, ARE SO CRUCIAL IN TERMS OF WHERE WE ARE RIGHT NOW IN HISTORY.'

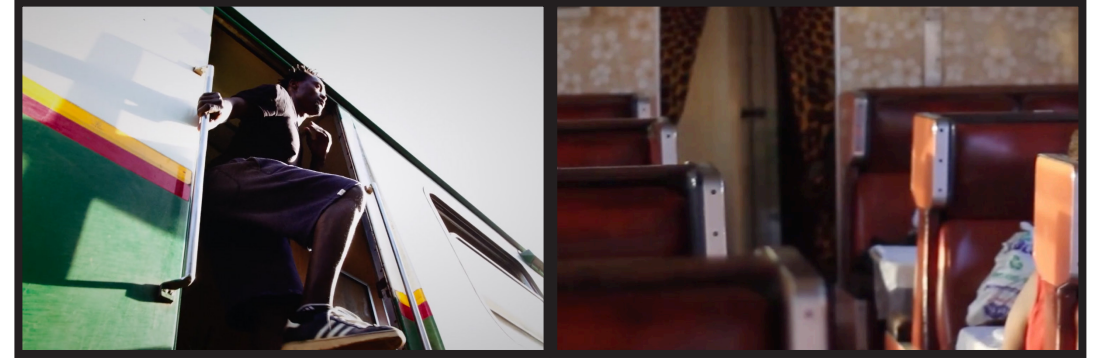
ARTIST, EAST 2019.





2017

Cabins were filled to the brim. People were everywhere: legs hanging out of bunkbeds, torsos squeezed against door frames and cigarettes burning out of windows. Creatives from all walks of life huddled together, alongside the odd bag of maize and stray chickens. There were bursts of laughter, people clambered on tables to hit a harmony and balanced between two carriages to record the rumble of the train on the track. The sounds of a classical guitar echoed down the corridor and were captured by the beat of a drum or an iPhone. Dancers



jumped out of cupboards and the walls were transformed into a string installation. All too quickly it came to an end. But, on the coast, this eclectic energy was translated onto the stage. Projections by passengers and filmmakers, poetry by funders, sat together alongside emerging and internationally renowned musicians. The work-in-progress was full, vibrant and incredibly diverse. as percussionist was deconstructed and a new way of working operating emerged.

Research notes from EAST 2017  
Edited in Kampala, Uganda, May 2017.



Photos: Nikkisi Serumaga and Emily McCartney

120



121





Photo: Chrissie Thompson





2019

Seven people squeezed up and against each other in the doorway of a two-bed cabin. Necks strained around the edges of the door, trying to see what was going to happen... From the darkness a gong was hit, and the erratic sound of hundreds of lids, bouncing, leaping, rattling escaping over the edge of what appeared to be a flat bowl under the physical pressure of the train rumbling along. The scene gradually was brought into focus by a red torch, and an intimate and tender exchange between two artists emerged. Drawing together visuals and movement,



with just the train and their props as a soundtrack, their bodies negotiated each other, and, whilst just an initial glimpse into an early idea, wove themes of motherhood, birth and ancestral histories together. Safina and Diya packed their suitcases and carried their burdens down the corridor. As this short piece drew to an end, the audience followed them, captivated. Standing in the dark corridor we were all silent for a few seconds, deeply moved and left wanting to know more.

Research notes from EAST 2019  
Edited in Berlin, Germany, November 2019.



Photos: Yule Burlefinger and Ian Kacungira

124



125



'AS A CONSEQUENCE OF THIS INTENSE CREATIVE ADVENTURE NEW PRACTICE EMERGES, I WAS STRUCK BY HOW POWERFULLY EAST MANAGED TO CONNECT A LARGE PUBLIC AUDIENCE, WHO DO NOT NORMALLY HAVE ACCESS TO CONTEMPORARY ART AND PERFORMANCE EVENTS, AND IMMERSE THEM IN NEW IDEAS, PRACTICE AND, AT TIMES, ABSTRACT WORK. TANZANIA IS IN NEED OF NEW CUTTING-EDGE CREATIVE WORK, TO ENGAGE LOCAL, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL AUDIENCES IN THE COUNTRY AND REGION'S DEVELOPING CREATIVE SCENE. EAST PROVIDES AUDIENCES WITH AN EXCITING, VIBRANT, DIVERSE AND CONTEMPORARY REFLECTION ON CULTURAL WORK.'

STAKEHOLDER, EAST 2019.





With EAST we create an environment that is full of possibilities. It is then down to the participants to determine their experience and the outcomes. Beyond the project itself we have seen traces of EAST and its collaborations across the region and further afield: at Kampala Fashion Week and in Salooni – a travelling, modular, multidisciplinary art installation exploring black hair; in events and performances in Kampala, Kigali, and Nairobi; at academic conferences and arts events in Europe, as well as on global streaming platforms such as Spotify. EAST has been referenced as a catalyst for both the 'NuNairobi' movement spearheaded by Taio and EA Wave, and the 'Freehand Movement', which develops visual storytelling strategies to foster creativity in children.

Embracing uncertainty is a political decision in an East African context, the potential of which lies in disrupting hegemonic, directive, cause and effect narratives. Since undertaking this research my sense is that, rather than pinning down moments of art and performance, there is a need to open them up, in order to understand their relationship to change in a more expansive way. For, whilst sometimes challenging, uncertainty can be productive, leading to new opportunities rather than fixing us in the past.



Photo: Jude Clark





Photo: Yule Burlefinger

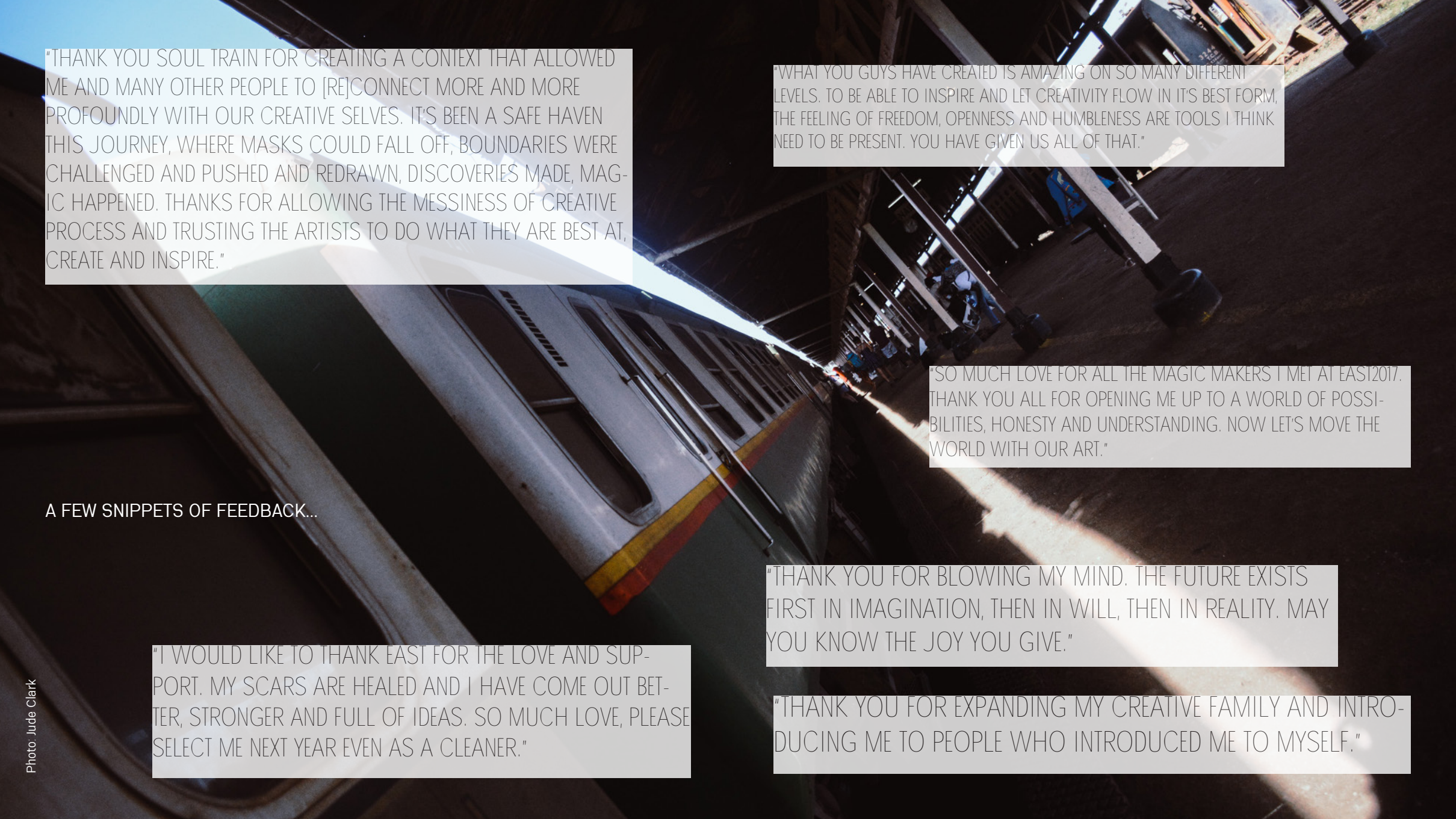


Photo: Yule Burlefinger

Looking forward to EAST 2020, our intention is to build on our learning and bring people from across the sector together to exchange, discuss and create with one another in a way that usually is not possible for them. We hope this will include artists from East Africa, India, Europe and the US, Pan-African thinkers from across the continent, the diaspora, as well as festival programmers and creative sector stakeholders. As well as new work, new ways of understanding and articulating the relationship between art, performance and change urgent-

ly need reimagining in order to raise support and the profile of contemporary art and cutting-edge performance practices in the region. Through harnessing EAST's unique environment, the ambition is for this diverse group to think and create collaboratively. The aim is also to explore how and why they are passionate about the arts, and to begin to open up new ways of working together more effectively.





"THANK YOU SOUL TRAIN FOR CREATING A CONTEXT THAT ALLOWED ME AND MANY OTHER PEOPLE TO [RE]CONNECT MORE AND MORE PROFOUNDLY WITH OUR CREATIVE SELVES. IT'S BEEN A SAFE HAVEN THIS JOURNEY, WHERE MASKS COULD FALL OFF, BOUNDARIES WERE CHALLENGED AND PUSHED AND REDRAWN, DISCOVERIES MADE, MAGIC HAPPENED. THANKS FOR ALLOWING THE MESSINESS OF CREATIVE PROCESS AND TRUSTING THE ARTISTS TO DO WHAT THEY ARE BEST AT, CREATE AND INSPIRE."

"WHAT YOU GUYS HAVE CREATED IS AMAZING ON SO MANY DIFFERENT LEVELS. TO BE ABLE TO INSPIRE AND LET CREATIVITY FLOW IN IT'S BEST FORM, THE FEELING OF FREEDOM, OPENNESS AND HUMBLENESS ARE TOOLS I THINK NEED TO BE PRESENT. YOU HAVE GIVEN US ALL OF THAT."

"SO MUCH LOVE FOR ALL THE MAGIC MAKERS I MET AT EAST2017. THANK YOU ALL FOR OPENING ME UP TO A WORLD OF POSSIBILITIES, HONESTY AND UNDERSTANDING. NOW LET'S MOVE THE WORLD WITH OUR ART."

A FEW SNIPPETS OF FEEDBACK...

"I WOULD LIKE TO THANK EAST FOR THE LOVE AND SUPPORT. MY SCARS ARE HEALED AND I HAVE COME OUT BETTER, STRONGER AND FULL OF IDEAS. SO MUCH LOVE, PLEASE SELECT ME NEXT YEAR EVEN AS A CLEANER."

"THANK YOU FOR BLOWING MY MIND. THE FUTURE EXISTS FIRST IN IMAGINATION, THEN IN WILL, THEN IN REALITY. MAY YOU KNOW THE JOY YOU GIVE."

"THANK YOU FOR EXPANDING MY CREATIVE FAMILY AND INTRODUCING ME TO PEOPLE WHO INTRODUCED ME TO MYSELF."





Photo: Yule Burlefinger

Founded by Geraldine Hepp and Poppy Spowage in 2016, EAST has been brought to life by individual creative professionals and through collaborations with organisations, ventures and foundations such as What's Good Studios (KE), Distant Relatives Backpackers (KE), Creatives Garage (KE), British Council (EA), Africalia (BE), Techne and Arts and Humanities Research Council (UK) and Bayimba (UG). Confirmed partners for EAST 2020 include: African Culture Fund (ML), CDEA (TZ), BASATA (TZ), TaSUBa (TZ), Burning Man (US), Goethe Institute (EA), British Council (EA), MeshWorks (UK), and FireFly (TZ). The core team making things happen throughout one or more editions has featured: Adam Chienjo, Brian Msafiri, Checkmate Mido, Chrissie Thompson, Evans Campbell, George Gikaria, Geraldine Hepp, Jojo Abot, Maimouna Jallow, Marion Munga, Mirembe Musisi, Patience Asaba Katushabe, Poppy Spowage, Sarah Drain, Sarah Mallia and Yule Burlefinger.







BY POPPY SPOWAGE